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Community-Based Education Program



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Promotional Copy

#4227 – History of a Community Organization II

Organization Information

The host organization is a community of students, Trent University faculty and Peterborough residents, dedicated to facilitating a politics of resistance. The host works towards creating and reclaiming spaces within the Peterborough and Trent University communities for those who have been marginalized, excluded, and underprivileged. The host believes in actively fighting for, creating, and maintaining space where individuals can feel safe enough to express themselves as individuals and communities. The host is dedicated to being a safe space for all people, operating on an anti-oppressive mandate with an explicit commitment to confronting and challenging all forms of oppression.

Project Information

The purpose of this project is to record the history of the host organization's work, growth, development and involvement in the Peterborough community. Over the past few years, the host has been working to reorient and expand its services and its communities, specifically taking accountability for the inaccessibility faced by trans folks and communities of colour. The goal of the project is to create a work that documents the growth, struggle, (re)development and future paths of the host organization. The host would like the student(s) to:

- a. Collect data/information about the host organization through archival research
- b. Conduct interviews with past workers, members, community members and alumni
- c. Research history of feminist organizing, theorizing on inclusion of other marginalized communities with the feminist movement, specifically trans and queer theory criticism. Using the host as a local example, the student will examine how feminist organizing has transitioned both successfully and unsuccessfully towards a more inclusive movement.
- d. Contact similar groups across Canada (asking for their resources, letting them know about project, asking if they want the final document in spring 2012)
- e. Create an accessible report or final product (any format!) reflecting the knowledge acquired through research, the history of the host organization, barriers faced by feminist organizing, the future of the host organization and the greater community.
- f. Distribute and present final product with assistance of staff and steering collective. This will include sending the final report to groups across Canada requesting it and presenting at the host organization's AGM.

The student will also be expected to attend biweekly meetings to update and receive support and guidance from staff and steering collective members.

Benefit to the Host Organization and Community

This project will benefit the host organization because it will allow us to acknowledge the history of the organization and provide a better basis for continued challenges and changes in the upcoming years of the host organization's work. Further, this work will provide a necessary understanding for those who work and volunteer with the organization – which often experiences a high turnover rate due to a high level of student participation. This project builds institutional memory and allows all those involved with the host to have a common understanding of where we've been and where we are going.

The project benefits the greater community of feminist organizing by creating a space for conversation and critique as well as sharing resources and experiences.

The transition to become a safer and more accessible space is common to many feminist focused social justice non-profits. An additional part of this project will be sharing the knowledge learned with interested organizations and student groups across Canada, while also networking to create a support and resource sharing community with a focus on gender justice.

What students might learn

The student has the opportunity to acquire a variety of different skills and experiences from the project. Firstly, by working with the host organization's anti-oppressive policy and consensus, non-hierarchy structure, the student will be introduced to alternative forms of decision making, conflict resolution and organizing critical of privileges. Additionally, the student has the potential to developed stronger organizational and time management skills and personal initiative as they work with a diverse group of people, with a variety of different roles. The student will also have the opportunity to network with allied organizations and individuals. Lastly, the student can develop a stronger sense of critical awareness, research skills and ability to integrate academia and feminist theory into community organizing and accessible documentation.

Screening or Training Requirements

The student must firstly commit to the host organization's anti-oppressive policy and mandate, which includes confidentiality. They must also have a background or strong interest in research (archival research, feminist research methods) and a strong interest in exploring the host organization's history.

Skills or Experience Needed

- Be able to work independently
- Knowledge of the host organization's work within the community
- Knowledge of community groups/non-profit organizations
- High level of critical awareness
- Understanding or interest in the following considered an asset: gender studies, feminist though/theory, postcolonial theory, queer studies, native studies, Canadian studies, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology,, urban social geography
- Knowledge of anti-oppression and gender justice

Resources Required for Project Provided by Host

The host organization will supply all resources needed for this project. In some cases the student may need to purchase the supplies, but will be reimbursed for the cost. Levy fees, grants, and fundraising makes it possible for the host to be responsible for costs. In addition, the student will have access to the host organization's networks, through those already involved with the organization. All expenditures must be pre-approved by the host.